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ABSTRACT

"The ERIC Review," announces research results, publications, and new programs relevant to each issue's theme topic. This issue exammines children's readiness to enter school, via two principal articles: "Readiness: Children and Their Schools," by Lilian G. Katz; and "Getting Ready for Readiness: A Case Study," by Laura J. Colker. In addition, the following features related to school readiness are provided: (1) an announcement of a packet, "Striving for Excellence: The National Education Goals" prepared by the ERIC System; (2) highlights of 11 recent federal school readiness initiatives; (3) a list of 14 resource organizations, 9 federal agencies, and 2 ERIC clearinghouses; (4) a 30-item annotated general reading list; (5) a brief article, "Early School Entry Is Essential for Many Gifted Children," by Craig Howley; (6) an ERIC digest, "Preparing Children with Disabilities for School," by Dianna Pinkerton; and (7) an annotated list of 34 new publications produced by the ERIC clearinghouses and the Office of Educational Research and Improvement. (BBM)

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THE ERIC

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For people concerned about education

Readiness: Children and Their Schools

Getting Ready for Readiness: A Case Study

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An Important Message to Our Readers

This issue of *The ERIC Review* examines children's readiness to enter school. School readiness is addressed in the first of six national education goals formulated by the President and the nation's governors to dramatically improve educational opportunity and achievement in this country by the year 2000. These six national education goals are as follows:

1. By the year 2000, all children in America will start school ready to learn.
2. By the year 2000, the high school graduation rate will increase to at least 90 percent.
3. By the year 2000, American students will leave grades four, eight, and twelve having demonstrated competency in challenging subject matter including English, mathematics, science, history, and geography; and every school in America will ensure that all students learn to use their minds well, so they may be prepared for responsible citizenship, further learning, and productive employment in our modern economy.
4. By the year 2000, U.S. students will be first in the world in science and mathematics achievement.
5. By the year 2000, every adult American will be literate and will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.
6. By the year 2000, every school in America will be free of drugs and violence and will offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning.

Achieving the national education goals will require the efforts and cooperation of all citizens. Parents, schools, and communities all have roles to play in preparing young children to enter and succeed in school. As Lilian Katz notes in this issue's lead article, children need to be ready to enter schools, and schools need to be ready to educate the children who enter. A case study of a pilot program to adapt early childhood education practices to elementary schools and articles on school readiness as it relates to gifted children and children with disabilities are also included in this issue. A list of resource organizations, federal school readiness initiatives, and additional readings will help you pursue the topic.

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THE ERIC REVIEW

READINESS: CHILDREN AND THEIR SCHOOLS

by Dr. Lilian G. Katz

The readiness of America's children to benefit from schooling was one of the major issues discussed by the President and the nation's governors at the 1989 education summit. The first of six national education goals announced by the President in 1990 was: "By the year 2000, all children in America will start school ready to learn." The following specific objectives were further defined under the goal:

- All disadvantaged and disabled children will have access to high quality and developmentally appropriate preschool programs that help prepare children for school.

- Every parent in America will be a child's first teacher and devote time each day to helping his or her preschool child learn; parents will have access to the training and support they need.

- Children will receive the nutrition and health care needed to arrive at school with healthy minds and bodies, and the number of low birthweight babies will be significantly reduced through enhanced prenatal health sytems.

This article will explore major issues related to readiness that those who are striving to achieve the goal will need to address.

The Concept of Readiness

After considering the readiness goal and its more specific objectives, policymakers, educators, and parents are likely to have questions about the concept of readiness. This concept has been debated for more than a century (Kagan, 1990). The main issue debated is the extent to which development and learning are determined by biological maturational processes versus experience. Maturationists emphasize internal developmental processes that render children more or less able to benefit from formal instruction. Interactionists take the position that inherent maturational processes and experience interact to contribute to children's learning and that virtually all human beings are born with a powerful, built-in disposition to learn. Indeed, the quantity and rate of learning during the first few years of life are nothing short of spectacular. The fact that by 3 or 4 years of age most children can understand and use the language of those around them is just one example of learning that takes place long before children begin school. In other words, children are born ready to learn!

However, *what* children learn during their first few years, *how* they learn, and *how much* they learn depends on many factors. Among the most important factors are the children's physical well-being and their emotional and cognitive relationships with those who care for them. The school readiness goal reflects two broad concerns about these factors. The first concern is related to characteristics of the children themselves, such as the fact that increasing numbers of young children live in poverty and/or in single-parent households, have limited proficiency in English, are affected by the drug abuse of their parents, have poor nutrition, and receive inadequate health care. These conditions are frequently a source of stress on families and affect how much and how well children's natural disposition to learn is encouraged and strengthened.

The second area of concern involves such matters as the high incidence of retention in kindergarten and the primary grades, delayed school entry practices in some school districts, segregated transition classes in others, increasing use of standardized tests to determine children's readiness to enter school, and the employment of such tests to deny some children entrance to school and to place them in special classes. These trends are due largely to a historic downward movement of the academic curriculum: the college curriculum of a previous generation moves down into the high school curriculum, the replaced high school curriculum moves down into the elementary school, which pushes the elementary curriculum further down to the first years of formal education. This trend means that children are receiving more formal, whole-group academic instruction at increasingly younger ages, which may now be so incompatible with the children's neurological and mental capacities as to produce excessive stress and failure among young children during the first year of school.

These two areas of concern suggest that reaching the school readiness goal will

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require a twofold strategy: one part focused on supporting families in their efforts to help their children get ready for school and the second on helping the schools to prepare for the children by being responsive to the wide range of backgrounds, experiences, languages, and needs children bring with them to school.

In sum, one of the main issues embedded in the national school readiness goal is that when many children approach their first school experience, they are not ready to learn what most schools want them to learn. The arguments among specialists, educators, and the public at large on these issues are not about whether young children should obtain good grounding in the basic skills; the main point of contention is *when* it should be accomplished.

Some of the causes of the presumed unreadiness of children for school result from the conditions in which they are growing up, and some reside within the school itself. Thus, one of the important problems for communities, parents, and educators to address is how communities and their agencies can help families get their children off to a good start. Another issue to be addressed is how the schools can better respond to the children on their doorsteps. In other words, how can schools respond effectively to the wide range of individual differences in background, development, and prior experience with stories, books, pencils, group settings, and so forth that differentially equip children to adapt to their first school setting?

Getting Children Ready for School

The term "readiness" is commonly used to mean readiness to learn to read. However, children's ability to adapt to the school situation and its demands involves more aspects of their development than the knowledge and skills involved in reading. Children's general social development and intellectual backgrounds should also be taken into account when considering ways of helping children to prepare for experiences they are likely to encounter in school.

Social Readiness

When children enter school they have to be ready to function in an environment different from that of the family, an environment in which individual needs are not well known, in which group norms and expectations prevail, in which there can be a large number of different relationships, and in which one's place is neither clear nor given.

"Children are more likely to cope successfully with their first school experience if they come to it with a backlog of positive experiences of being in a group away from home . . ."

Children are more likely to cope successfully with their first school experience if they come to it with a backlog of positive experiences of being in a group away from home with very familiar adults. Children for whom a prekindergarten or kindergarten class is the first group experience outside of the home will require plenty of time and support to adjust to group life and the classroom routines and to be able to function independently in the class. It is rarely helpful to push or cajole a child who is new to the "big school" into conformity. Indeed, it is developmentally appropriate for a young child to be somewhat wary and cautious in an environment full of people who are largely strangers! Young children are also more likely to approach new relationships with adults with confidence if they have already had some previous positive experience with nonfamily authority figures. Participation in a good preschool program affords such experience. However, some children may be wary of the school setting because their previous group experiences have been unpleasant. In either case, the newcomer's hesitation should be treated with respect and patience.

Young children are also more likely to adjust easily to school life if they have experienced satisfying relationships with a few peers. The evidence is now compelling that children who fail to achieve minimal competence in social relationships with their peers during the early years are at risk of developing a variety of social maladaptations, including academic failure, dropping out of school, and later mental health difficulties (Katz and McClellan, 1991).

Parents and preschool teachers can help pave the way for a child's adjustment to school by providing ample opportunities for interaction with peers in which the child can learn such social skills as taking turns, making compromises, and approaching unfamiliar children. A young child who is not yet able to approach peers with confidence will benefit from much support, guidance, and patience from the teacher.

One of the most important influences on children's social development is experience within the family. It should be noted that the whole range of social difficulties identified during early childhood can be observed among children of all social classes and ethnic backgrounds (Katz and McClellan, 1991). However, because not all the children within a particular family achieve the same success in developing social competence, the family does not provide a single environment, and the processes by which individual children within it acquire social competence are not easy to discern. Thus a parent may have a few worries about the social development of one child, whereas for other children in the family, entry into new peer groups went smoothly.

Some young children are unable to meet the expectations of the class because they are having social difficulties, such as feeling rejected by peers. Some children create social difficulties, for example, by starting fights with peers, because they cannot meet the expectations of the class. However, if children are having social difficulties such as being unable to approach unfamiliar peers because their mastery of their peers' language is limited, or because the activities available and topics addressed are unrelated to their

own cultural background, their social difficulties may be exacerbated (Katz and McClellan, 1991).

The available evidence indicates that helping families with their children's social development should be put high on the list of strategies to address the readiness goal. Local community agencies, working with groups, individual parents and teachers, and other school personnel (e.g., social workers and psychologists) can help by providing resources for parents that specifically address strategies for fostering their young children's social development.

Intellectual Readiness

Children are more likely to feel competent in school if they can understand and use the language of the peers and adults they meet within it. In many communities, the number and variety of languages spoken is so large that it is not possible for all of the children in a class to have a teacher who speaks their language and materials available to them in their own language. However, communities and school districts must make every possible effort to identify adults who can help children of all language backgrounds in the school.

In a similar way, young children are more likely to have confidence in their ability to cope with school if they can relate to the ideas and topics introduced by the teacher and discussed by other children in class activities. Parents and preschool teachers can help by familiarizing children with a wide range of stories, songs, and linguistic expressions likely to be encountered in the school setting.

"At-risk" children are often assumed to be deficient in experience and to suffer from lack of stimulation and therefore to be intellectually unprepared for school. However, very few children actually lack experience or stimulation. Although the content and nature of the experiences available to children in different settings are likely to vary widely, they are nevertheless experiences that can stimulate children's intellectual development.

For example, children growing up in the inner cities of America have plenty of experience and stimulation. But experience and stimulation are not, in and of themselves, conducive to optimal intellectual development. What young children require is adult help in making sense of their experience and giving meaning and order to the stimulation that surrounds them. A young child in a crowded environment in which many people come and go, often in unpredictable ways, may find it stimulating—especially at first; but without someone's help in explaining and understanding why people come and go, where they go, what they do, what they are planning, and the like, the stimulation can be incoherent and overwhelming. After a few years of incomprehensible stimulation, children give up being able to make sense of their experience, and eventually natural curiosity about their world and the disposition to learn about it are likely to weaken and even disappear.

"The community, working with local preschools, adult education programs, children's librarians, and other similar agency and resource people, can help by providing experiences for preschoolers which help them make sense of their everyday worlds."

Although all children are born with the predisposition to learn, in a few cases that predisposition may be weakened by the time a child enters school because of insufficient adult response to the child's explorations and questions. As Rogoff (1990) points out, all significant learning, especially in the early years, occurs in social contexts and is embedded in social relationships.

The community, working with local preschools, adult education programs, children's librarians, and other similar agency and resource people, can help by providing experiences for preschoolers which help them make sense of their everyday worlds. Preschool teachers and others could help familiarize children with songs and stories and provide opportunities for conversation using important words and phrases in English. Adults should also encourage and help children translate songs, stories, and important words and phrases into other languages that may be spoken by children in the neighborhood school. The school district or individual school may have to take leadership for bringing the relevant agencies, specialists, and resource groups together to enable optimal use of the available resources in the community.

Parents and preschool teachers can strengthen intellectual preparedness by providing children ample opportunity for conversation, discussion, and cooperative work and play with peers with whom they are likely to start school. Parents of children not enrolled in a preschool program can help by talking to the staff at the children's future school about the kinds of stories, songs, and special activities and field trips usually offered at the school and by introducing related topics to their children.

Getting the School Ready for the Children

The most important strategy for addressing the school readiness goal is to prepare the school to be responsive to the wide range of experiences, backgrounds, and needs of the children expected to come to the school. Aspects of school practices to be considered in this effort include the curriculum, staffing patterns, and age considerations.

Appropriate Curriculum

A position statement on school readiness issued by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (1990) points out that, given the nature of children's development, "the curriculum in the early grades must provide meaningful contexts for children's learning rather than focusing primarily

on isolated skills acquisitions" (p. 22). In other words, the school readiness goal should be addressed by adopting curriculum and teaching practices that are developmentally appropriate. The nature of development is such that curriculum and teaching practices in the early years are appropriate if they take into account the following developmental principles:

■ ***Informality.*** The younger the child, the larger proportion of time should be allocated to informal versus formal learning experiences. As children grow older, their capacity to benefit from formal, whole-group instruction increases. However, in the case of young children, when a single formal method of instruction is used for a group of children diverse in background, experience, language, aptitudes, interests, and developmental rates, a significant proportion of the group is condemned to fail.

There are at least three kinds of informal activities to be provided for young children: (1) spontaneous dramatic play, (2) arts and craft activities, and (3) cooperative work on extended group investigations and exploratory and constructive projects in which the teacher role is consultative rather than didactic. Although young children benefit from having all three kinds of informal activities on a regular basis, it is the last kind that provides a context for challenging all aspects of children's intellectual and social growth (Katz and Chard, 1989).

An important part of this developmental principle is that the more informal the learning environment is, the more access the teacher has to information about where the learners are in their development, what is easy for them, what confuses them, and what kinds of help they really need. Formal instruction tends to reduce teachers' access to information about the learners they are trying to help. Thus the curriculum during the first years of school must emphasize small-group work. As the children work together on various investigations, teachers are in an ideal position to make observations of individual children's progress and needs. On the basis of these observations, teachers can plan systematic instruction in the basic skills and other learning to be given to small groups of children or individuals as needed.

■ ***Horizontal relevance.*** The younger the children, the more important it is that what they learn is meaningful in the present. Horizontal relevance contrasts with vertical relevance, which is characteristic of learning designed to prepare children for the next lesson or the next grade or another future experience and lacks meaningfulness in the present. As children grow older, their capacity to benefit from learning that has vertical, or future, relevance increases. The developmental emphasis must be that what the children learn during the early years is designed to help them make sense of their own experiences and environments. Young children might study buildings in their own neighborhoods or animals encountered in their own environments rather than ancient castles or exotic creatures of the past such as dinosaurs. As children grow older, it is the responsibility of schools to help them understand the experiences and environments of others—those who are far away in both time and place. But during the early years, the nature of intellectual development is such that content and skills emphasized should have horizontal relevance.

"... the more informal the learning environment is, the more access the teacher has to information about where the learners are in their development ..."

■ ***Interactive learning processes.*** The younger the children, the more they learn through interactive processes versus passive, receptive processes. That is not to say young children cannot learn from passive, receptive processes; indeed, young children learn a great deal from experiences in which their role is a passive one, such as television viewing or listening to stories. However, the disposition to go on learning, which is a major goal for all of education, is strengthened primarily by engagement in active exploration and investigation as well as interaction with real environments and objects.

■ ***Application of skills.*** Skills can be acquired and strengthened through a variety of processes—observations, imitation, trial and error, coaching, and instruction. They can be improved with optimum drill and practice. In young children, skills are best developed and strengthened when they are applied in meaningful contexts and free from performance criteriâ (Katz, 1991).

Appropriate Staffing

Teachers are more likely to be able to accommodate the diversity of experiences, backgrounds, languages, and interests of their pupils if their classes are small and if they have the services of a qualified full-time aide. To address both the social and the intellectual development of children who are potentially at risk for academic difficulties requires the skillful deployment of at least 2 adults for every 18 to 20 children in the kindergarten. Furthermore, having two adults in each class makes it easier to staff classes with adults who speak more than one language. Small child/staff ratios provide teachers with the opportunity to spend unhurried time with every child, to address each child's unique needs, and to develop good relationships with parents.

Age Considerations

The National Association for the Education of Young Children's Position Statement on School Readiness (1990) points out that, contrary to what is commonly assumed, there are no tests by which to determine reliably whether a child is "ready" to begin school. "Therefore, the only legally and ethically defensible criterion for determining school entry is whether the child has reached the legal chronological age of school entry" (p. 22). [For a counterpoint to this statement, see "Early School Entry Is Essential for Many Gifted Children" on p. 19.]

Some school districts are experimenting with mixed-age grouping in the early grades as a way of reducing grade retention rates and encouraging children to help each other in all areas of learning (Katz, Evangelou, and Hartman, 1990).

Realizing the goal of having all our children ready for school and all our schools ready for the children by the year 2000 will require the best efforts of all involved: parents, teachers, administrators, and everyone in the community who has a stake in the well-being of its children. And that's just about everybody!

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ERIC

ERIC System Responds to the National Education Goals

The ERIC System has prepared a packet, *Striving for Excellence: The National Education Goals*, to help teachers, parents, and community members learn more about the goals and explore promising programs and practices for achieving them. Consisting of 30 separate *ERIC Digests* grouped around the goal areas, the packet synthesizes and summarizes research and program findings related to school readiness; high school completion; student achievement and citizenship; science and mathematics; adult literacy and lifelong learning; and safe, disciplined, and drug-free schools. Each of the 16 subject-specific ERIC Clearinghouses contributed to the packet, which may be freely reproduced, in whole or in part, by organizations or individuals.

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THE ERIC Review

GETTING READY FOR READINESS: A CASE STUDY

by Laura J. Colker

A typical school day in this Washington, D.C., elementary school finds 8-year-old Jamal sitting quietly in the back of his first-grade classroom staring blankly at a worksheet most of the other children in the class have long since completed. He appears totally disengaged from his work and the others in the classroom until he hears the shouts of second-graders playing kickball outside. He turns his head toward the windows and listens intently. The sound of his teacher's voice asking him what he is doing clearly startles him. He turns toward his teacher and responds with a loud, "Huh?"

Children like Jamal are the focus of the national education goal for readiness, which calls for a commitment to restructuring traditional approaches to education. As Dr. Lilian Katz's compelling article notes, there are two factors at work in effecting appropriate change: (1) supporting families in their efforts to get children ready for school, and (2) supporting schools in their efforts to help children learn.

Although we, as a nation, have a long way to go toward supporting families in their efforts to ensure that their children are ready for school, we do have accepted models of approaches that work. Head Start, for example, can be considered one of the true educational and federal success stories of all time (Stewart and Robinson, 1990). Head Start is administered locally by more than 1,200 community-based organizations and school systems with funding from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Its programs include health, education, parent involvement, and social service components designed to meet the comprehensive needs of low-income young children within the context of the family.

Those who look to Head Start for guidance in implementing the readiness goal cite the research on related early-childhood development efforts that "demonstrate convincingly that the educational attainments and life opportunities of low income and minority children can be dramatically improved by interventions parallel to those carried out in . . . day-to-day Head Start programs" (Collins and Kinney, 1989).

Exciting new approaches that build on the strengths of programs like Head Start in elementary schools are now being initiated in several districts across the nation. This article describes a program in the District of Columbia public schools that addresses the needs of children who, like Jamal, are not being reached by traditional schooling.

Building a Case for Readiness

In 1987, the District of Columbia Public Schools' Office of Educational Accountability and Planning launched a 3-year longitudinal study to gain a better understanding of why learning deficits were occurring in the primary grades. To illustrate, a class of children whose average social development level was 96.61 on the Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scale at the end of prekindergarten had an average score of only 91.54 at the end of kindergarten the following year (District of Columbia Public Schools, 1989). Even more disturbing was the fact that 14 percent of first-grade students in the school system were retained at grade level annually. A full one-third of first-grade boys were failing each year (Marcon, 1990).

To help determine why such failures were happening, researchers attempted to link educational practices with educational outcomes. They concluded that academically oriented, teacher-directed classrooms produced children who did not fare well in the school system. Conversely, children in more active, child-initiated settings that, like Head Start, focused on the development of social competence, fared better in all domains, including the academic. In this regard, Marcon (1990) wrote, "Choosing to foster cognitive development over social, affective, and motor development can only lead to later difficulties" (p. vii). The results of the

Laura J. Colker is the Education Specialist for the ERIC Document Reproduction Service. She also serves as the Documentarian for the District of Columbia Public Schools' readiness project described in this article.

3-year study were summarized as follows:

> A clear and consistent theme emerges. The extension of formal education experiences downward does little to promote academic preparation in our children and can actually hinder children's later school achievement and overall development . . . Results clearly support implementation of more active, child-initiated learning experiences at both the pre-primary and primary level . . . To do otherwise virtually guarantees continuation of high first-grade retention rates and further impairment of our children . . . (Marcon, 1990, pp. vi–vii).

Breaking the Cycle of Failure

Confronted with a situation in which an unacceptable number of children were, in Dr. Katz's terms, "unready to learn what . . . schools want them to learn," the Office of Early Education in the District of Columbia Public Schools joined forces with The National Day Care Association, a Head Start grantee, and Teaching Strategies, Inc., a private materials development and training firm, to try to break this cycle of failure and promote readiness. Funded by HHS under the 1990 Discretionary Grants Program, this 3-year effort has the following objectives:

- To work with Head Start parents to enlist their support for their children's learning and to continue to support them as their children move into the public school system.
- To identify and implement effective strategies to ease the transition from Head Start to the public schools.
- To develop and implement a developmentally appropriate curriculum for kindergarten and first and second grades.
- To ease the requirements to assess and test children during the early school years.
- To document and disseminate effective strategies for implementing developmentally appropriate practices in the public school curriculum for kindergarten through second grade.

Five of the District's 123 elementary schools were selected as potential experimental sites for this effort. The two criteria for participation were the existence of a District of Columbia Public Schools Head Start program operating on-site and the stewardship of a strong principal. Project staff met with the faculty at each potential site and, based on the perceived enthusiasm of the staff for the proposed project, selected two schools as experimental sites. Due to a limited evaluation budget, no control schools were identified.

> ***"The plan is to marry the learning goals for children in grades K–2 with successful Head Start practices. Education, in this context, is an upward pull from early childhood education rather than the downward push . . ."***

In the first year of operation, which focused on planning and strategizing, staff:

- Established a steering group representing all organizations in the collaborative effort. This group met monthly to discuss problems and identify approaches that would support project goals more effectively.
- Conducted seminars for elementary school principals to introduce them to current issues in early childhood education and to enlist their support in bringing about change.
- Conducted monthly workshops for participating Head Start and prekindergarten teachers.
- Provided monthly technical assistance to the participating Head Start and prekindergarten classrooms.
- Provided training for parents on how children learn and on the value of a developmental approach.

As the project enters its second year, the focus is on the development and gradual implementation of a curriculum and assessment strategy for grades K–2. The basis for bringing about change is *The Creative Curriculum for Early Childhood*, an established preschool and kindergarten curriculum developed by Teaching Strategies staff that is already being used by the participating Head Start centers and prekindergarten programs. The *Curriculum* is an environmentally based approach to instruction. Teachers are given guidance about how to set up and use interest areas such as the blocks area, the house corner, the library area, the sand and water area, and the outdoors to extend and enrich children's learning. The curriculum provides a framework for planning but does not define specific content for teachers to follow. Rather, it supports teachers in building content around the interests and experiences of their children so that learning takes place in a meaningful context.

In adapting this curriculum for use in the primary grades, the focus will be on supporting children's growth in language and literacy, math and logic, science, social studies, and creative art, music, and dramatic play while retaining an environment that promotes active learning and parental involvement. The plan is to marry the learning goals for children in grades K–2 with successful Head Start practices. Education, in this context, is an upward pull from early childhood education rather than the downward push described in Dr. Katz's article.

Adapting to Real-World Challenges

Despite the fact that all participants in this project believe that extending Head Start's approach to child-initiated programming upward into the primary grades will help children flourish, accomplishing this goal in a real-world

setting is not a straightforward process. Major barriers that exist within the school system and the community drive home the point that change does not come easily.

Beyond the anticipated problems inherent in a limited budget and a staff whose responsibilities already extend beyond reasonable boundaries, other unanticipated problems have developed. For example, central to making the project work is the need for team-building. But in trying to put this concept into practice, it soon became apparent that most members of the project team did not have a firm understanding of what team-building actually meant or what it required of them individually or as a group. Further, school principals were expected to be team-builders at their schools (indeed, schools were chosen because their principals had a reputation for strong, effective leadership), yet they were faced with conflicting demands on their time. Early childhood education is but one of an elementary school principal's priorities, and only rarely do principals have the luxury of placing it at the top of the list.

In this same vein, although all participants have been committed to this project, defining commitment operationally so that all participants have a shared vision has been a slow, evolutionary process. In hindsight, it is apparent that school staff did not have an adequate understanding of what would be required of them to make the project succeed. Many teachers tended to underestimate the time burden that would be placed on them for training and technical assistance. Neither they nor the school system were adequately prepared to find substitute teachers who could cover for classroom teachers during needed training sessions. In addition, the presence of substitutes and "pull-out" resource teachers for art or music or library time introduced others into the equation—some of whom did not share the project teachers' commitment to developmental appropriateness in general and to this project in particular.

Another problem has centered on the issue of control. While teachers report a strong feeling of control over their own classrooms, outside of this domain many teachers seem to feel they have very little say in how things are done. Unlike some other reform efforts, this project has demanded team-building and peer interaction. Teachers are encouraged to share thoughts and engage one another in a professional dialogue about teaching practices. Extending the art of teaching beyond individual classroom walls has been both uncomfortable and difficult for some participants.

"While teachers report a strong feeling of control over their own classrooms, outside of this domain many teachers seem to feel they have very little say in how things are done."

Individual sensitivities to philosophical issues have also posed problems. For example, how does one best approach experienced teachers who have been practicing what they have always believed to be good teaching methods with the news that their ways need to be changed? And, what do you do when people publicly support the concept of developmental appropriateness but do not realize this means making changes in practice as well as rhetoric? And how do you convince parents who are test-oriented that a program that supports social competence will actually help their children do better academically?

Each of these problems may be minor individually, but together they pose a major challenge. Change does not come about because educators review research and prescribe an appropriate plan of action. Change comes about because fears are addressed, egos are massaged, and people are convinced of the value of making the change. And once convinced, they need to be supported in their efforts.

Having learned these lessons, sometimes in painful ways, project staff rethought many of their assumptions and approaches used during the first year to see if problems that surfaced could be addressed more effectively. As a result, the following changes were instituted:

- Training is now being offered as an afterschool course rather than as a release-time activity. As noted, one of the most frustrating aspects of the first year's program was trying to arrange time for teachers to receive needed training. For one thing, there simply was not enough money to hire substitutes; nor was there a sufficient pool of available substitute teachers to facilitate the training effort. A number of other exciting—but competing—offerings were also available to teachers at the same time training for this project was scheduled. Teachers often had to choose between receiving training for this project and other activities that were of interest to them, such as emerging literacy. To accommodate this problem, project training is now offered as a course that does not conflict with other offerings or require the use of substitute teachers. In addition, teachers are extended the opportunity to receive graduate or recertification credit for their participation in the course. As a result of this change in approach, all 22 teachers in the participating schools have enrolled in the training course. In fact, this course has become so popular that teachers from nonparticipating schools in the District of Columbia have inquired about enrolling in it.

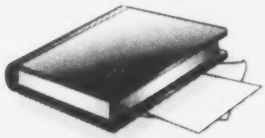
- Technical assistance is now scheduled at the teacher's request, rather than according to a predetermined project schedule. This accommodation gives teachers more control and removes the feeling that they are being checked up on. Now when staff observe a classroom, the teacher feels these observations are truly team-building rather than judgmental in nature.

- Teachers are asked to keep journals of their experiences. Journals enable them to keep notes to discuss with trainers at a later time, to vent their feelings, and to document the successes and frustrations they experience on a

day-to-day basis. Journals are collected monthly and receive a personal response from one of the trainers. It is anticipated that these journals will become a living history of the project.

■ During the summer between the first and second project years, teachers from the participating schools were hired as paid consultants to review the revised version of the *Creative Curriculum for Early Childhood* in terms of how well it fit the realities of their classrooms. Everyone benefited from this strategy. Project staff were able to see firsthand what the teachers' concerns were and take them into account as they began writing the version of the curriculum for grades one and two. Even more important, teachers serving in a consultative role tended to feel that their opinions were valued by project staff; as a result, they became invested in the project to an extent not envisioned during the first year.

This evolutionary process of team-building has led to positive preliminary results one-third of the way through the project. Many teachers feel the program validates what they have known instinctively to be appropriate for young children. Teachers in Head Start and prekindergarten say that as a result of last year's efforts, they are seeing child-initiated learning taking place at the beginning of the year—something they hardly would have believed possible a year ago. Teachers report that the *Creative Curriculum for Early Childhood* and their training have helped them to address parental concerns. Support from school principals has grown, too, as they see enthusiasm emanating from their teach-



Recent Federal School Readiness Initiatives

The U.S. Department of Education and other federal agencies such as the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) sponsor a number of programs and projects to support the first national education goal, which calls for all children in America to start school ready to learn by the year 2000. These federal initiatives include basic research as well as direct health and education services to young children and their families. There is a growing trend toward interagency collaboration in providing services to families with young children.

Within the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, Even Start provides assistance to instructional programs that combine literacy instruction for adults with training to enable them to support the educational growth of their children in and out of school. The Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs sponsors grants for preschool programs serving children with limited English proficiency, including disabled, gifted, and talented children.

The Office of Policy and Planning has sponsored a number of early childhood studies to help meet the need for up-to-date information on early education and care. Recent projects have examined trends in child care centers and family day care homes, the practices of 17 programs that help disadvantaged families support their children's educational development, and public school policies and practices related to the transition between preschool and kindergarten. In conjunction with the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, the Office of Policy and Planning also has prepared a handbook on implementing the first national goal. (This handbook, *Preparing Young Children for Success: Guideposts for Achieving Our First National Goal*, is included in the reading list on p. 17).

The Office of Research within the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) supports 25 National Research and Development Centers across the country. One of them, The Center on Families, Communities, Schools, and Children's Learning—a consortium headed by Boston University—is conducting several projects in the area of school readiness, including studies on what children need to know to succeed in school and on training quality staff for early education settings. Other projects supported by the Center include preschools for children of teenage mothers and the integration of school and community services for young children. In its second year of operation, the Center will consider aspects of integrated community services for families of children from birth to age 3.

Also within OERI, Programs for the Improvement of Practice (PIP) established the Ready to Learn project in 1990 to disseminate information to parents of preschoolers (mainly disadvantaged) about how they can prepare their children for school. An advisory task force of experts is determining effective strategies for reaching this target audience.

ers. Perhaps most telling of all is this comment made by one of the participating prekindergarten teachers: "I'm no longer tired at the end of the day."

Establishing a developmentally appropriate program takes time. Implementing the readiness goal in the District of Columbia's public schools—and in schools across the country—calls for participants to band together with a shared vision to support parents, teachers, and administrators if children are ultimately to benefit.

References

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Marcon, R. A. (December 1990). *Early Learning and Identification: Final Report of the Three-Year Longitudinal Study*. Washington, DC: District of Columbia Public Schools.

Stewart A. C. and D. H. Robinson (February 15, 1990). *The Head Start Program: Background Information and Issues*. Washington, DC: Report for Congress.

Recent Federal School Readiness Initiatives
(continued)

PIP also oversees 10 Regional Educational Laboratories across the country. The Regional Laboratory for Educational Improvement of the Northeast and Islands has embarked on a 3-year effort to improve linkages between early childhood education and early elementary school. The Laboratory's Early Childhood Education Project will help parents, educators, and social service agencies in New England, New York, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands ease young children's transitions from one learning environment to another.

The Far West Regional Laboratory's Center for Child and Family Studies has created a number of programs to improve the quality of care for children, influence policy, and educate the public about the changing conditions of families. It serves Arizona, California, Nevada, and Utah.

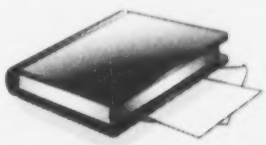
Another OERI program, the Fund for the Improvement and Reform of Schools and Teaching (FIRST), has sponsored demonstration grants as part of its Family–School Partnership Program since 1988. Some of the 33 active grants support programs that serve the preschool population; all are designed to increase parents' involvement in their children's learning. Through the Secretary's Fund for Innovation in Education, FIRST also supports programs that show promise in identifying and disseminating innovative approaches to improving preschool, as well as elementary and secondary education.

The U.S. Department of Education has been working with HHS to promote better coordination of Head Start and Chapter 1 in an attempt to ease participating children's transition from preschool to elementary school. The Administration for Children, Youth and Families (ACYF) within HHS is working to expand the Head Start program. Funding for the program has increased by more than $700 million between fiscal years 1989 and 1991. ACYF has also funded 32 projects to demonstrate the effectiveness of coordinated, comprehensive services to children beginning in Head Start and continuing through third grade. In 1989, ACYF funded 24 comprehensive child development projects to test the concept of providing "one-stop shopping" to deliver health, education, and economic services to low-income households with newborns or pregnant family members. Families will be served and tracked by the projects for 5 years.

The Family Support Administration and the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, also within HHS, are funding a large-scale evaluation of pregnant mothers of 3- to 5-year-olds as part of the Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Training Program.

Finally, the Surgeon General is launching an initiative called "Healthy Children, Ready to Learn," which focuses on health issues related to school readiness for children from birth to age 7. As part of this initiative, representatives from the U.S. Department of Education, HHS, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture held a national conference for parents, educators, health providers, and policymakers in February 1992.

Phone numbers for the federal school readiness initiatives described here are included in the list of resource organizations starting on page 12.



Organizations and Associations

American Montessori Society
This organization promotes the education principles of Dr. Maria Montessori, focusing on individual growth and peer stimulation among young children, with the teacher as observer. It oversees the development of materials and programs and offers information and placement services. 150 Fifth Avenue, Suite 203, New York, NY 10011; (212) 924–3209. Program Contact: Elizabeth Coe.

ASPIRA Association
This national Hispanic education leadership development organization operates demonstration projects in Hispanic communities in nine cities and produces booklets to help Hispanic parents with their children's education. 1112 16th Street NW, Suite 340, Washington, DC 20036; (202) 835-3600.

Association for Childhood Education International
This association encourages quality educational practices for infant to early adolescent children as well as professional growth for their teachers. It emphasizes the well-being of children in the home, school, and community through various publications, meetings, and outreach activities. 11501 Georgia Avenue, Suite 315, Wheaton, MD 20902; 1–800–423–3563. Program Contact: Gerald Odland, Executive Director.

Child Trends, Inc.
This research organization is conducting three projects related to school readiness: a synthesis of research on parental behaviors that reinforce the healthy physical development of infants and young children, a 5-year longitudinal study of families receiving public assistance to determine whether providing basic skills training to mothers affects the health and development of their children, and a feasibility study on the development and implementation of early childhood assessments in several nations. 2100 M Street NW, Washington, DC 20037; (202) 223–6288. Program Contact: Nicholas Zill.

Children's Defense Fund (CDF)
This advocacy organization conducts research and monitors federal and state legislation and performance on issues affecting the health and well-being of children and teenagers in the United States. CDF places special emphasis on the needs of children living in poverty. 122 C Street NW, Washington, DC 20001; (202) 628–8787.

Children's Television Resource and Education Center
This group's principal concern is the effect of television programming on children's social development, creativity, and academic success. It produces newsletters, research studies, and other publications, and offers curriculum and technical assistance to parents, teachers, and researchers working to ensure that television is a positive rather than negative influence on children's development. 330 Townsend Street, San Francisco, CA 94107; (415) 243–9943. Program Contact: Parker Page, President.

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)
NAEYC is dedicated to improving the quality of care and education of children from birth to age 8. It offers publications and videos for parents, day care providers, and elementary school personnel, as well as policy-related information and legislative analyses. It administers the National Academy of Early Childhood Programs, a voluntary national accreditation system for high-quality early childhood programs. 1834 Connecticut Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20009; 1–800–424–2460. Program Contacts: Pat Spahr and Barbara Willer.

National Black Child Development Institute
To improve the quality of life for black children and youth, this group provides direct services and conducts advocacy campaigns aimed at national and local public policies. It provides newsletters, a quarterly journal, legislative updates, topical research packages, conferences, and speakers on issues of health, child welfare, education, and child care. 1463 Rhode Island Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20005; (202) 387–1281. Program Contact: Sherry Deane.

National Center for Children in Poverty
This group encourages interdisciplinary thinking about the needs and opportunities for early intervention with young children (ages birth to 5) in poverty at the national, state, and local levels. It offers library services, publications, and referrals. Columbia University, 154 Haven Avenue, New York, NY 10032; (212) 927–8793. Program Contact: Carole Oshinsky.

National Early Childhood Technical Assistance System
Sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, this organization was established to assist state agencies in developing comprehensive services for young children with special needs and their families in accordance with Public Law 99–457. CB #8040, 500 NCNB Plaza, Chapel Hill, NC 27599–8040; (919) 962–2001. Program Contact: Joan Danaher.

National Head Start Association
This national organization seeks to upgrade the quality and quantity of Head Start program services. It conducts training sessions and seminars, maintains a speakers' bureau, and prepares organizational policies, positions, and statements. 1220 King Street, Suite 200, Alexandria, VA 22314; (703) 739–0875. Program Contact: Jim Matlack, Executive Director.

National Health/Education Consortium
Convened by the National Commission to Prevent Infant Mortality and the Institute for Educational Leadership, this group involves leaders of major health and education associations in an effort to integrate health and education services for children. The Consortium promotes collaborative approaches, disseminates information about the relationship between health and learning, and supports integrated public policy strategies. Institute for Educational Leadership, 1001 Connecticut Avenue NW, Suite 310, Washington, DC 20036; (202) 822–8405. National Commission To Prevent Infant Mortality, Switzer Building, Room 2014, 330 C Street SW, Washington, DC 20201; (202) 472–1364. Program Contact: Rae Grad, Executive Director.

National Information Center for Children and Youth With Disabilities (NICHCY)
This organization provides free information to assist parents, educators, caregivers, advocates, and others in helping children and youth with disabilities. NICHCY provides information on national, state, and local disability groups for parents and professionals and maintains databases with current information on disability topics. Publications include *News Digest* and *Parent Guides*. P.O. Box 1492, Washington, DC 20013; 1–800–999–5599.

Parents as Teachers (PAT) National Center
PAT encourages parents of children from birth to age 3 to think of themselves as their children's first and most influential teachers. It provides information and training to parents, supports public policy initiatives, and offers parent educator certification. University of Missouri–St. Louis, Marillac Hall, 8001 Natural Bridge Road, St. Louis, MO 63121–4499; (314) 553–5738. Program Contact: Claire Eldredge.

Federal Agencies

(see Recent Federal School Readiness Initiatives on p. 10.)

U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20202–7240

Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs
(202) 732–1840

Office of Educational Research and Improvement, Education Information Branch
1–800–424–1616 or (202) 219–1513

- Fund for the Improvement and Reform of Schools and Teaching
  (202) 219–1496
  - Secretary's Fund for Innovation in Education
    (202) 219–1496
- Office of Research
  (202) 219–2079
  - Center on Families, Communities, Schools, and Children's Learning
    (617) 353–3309
- Programs for the Improvement of Practice
  (202) 219–2164
  - Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development
    (415) 565–3000
  - Regional Laboratory for Educational Improvement of the Northeast and Islands
    1–800–347–4200

Office of Elementary and Secondary Education Compensatory Education Programs (Even Start)
(202) 401–1692

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

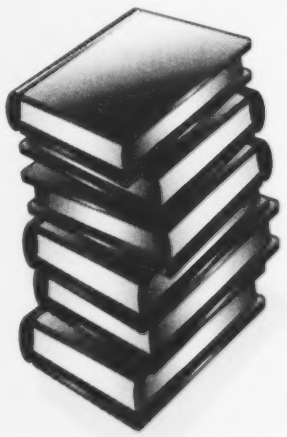
- Administration for Children, Youth and Families
  (202) 245–0347
- Surgeon General's "Healthy Children, Ready to Learn"
  (202) 245–7163

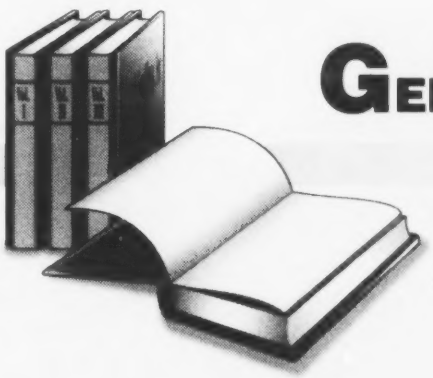
Clearinghouses

ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education

University of Illinois
College of Education
805 West Pennsylvania Avenue
Urbana, IL 61801–4897
(217) 333–1386

ERIC Clearinghouse on Handicapped and Gifted Children
Council for Exceptional Children
1920 Association Drive
Reston, VA 22091–1589
(703) 264–9474





General Reading List

The following titles cover a range of issues regarding school readiness. Some of them are free; others are available at a low cost. To order, contact the agencies listed below.

Achievement Testing in the Early Grades: The Games Grown-Ups Play

Constance Kamii, ed., 1990

This 190-page publication (#340) presents the case against achievement and readiness testing in kindergarten and first and second grades and calls for a rethinking of current educational goals and teaching methods. Addresses the concerns of a variety of audiences, including parents, teachers, administrators, school board members, policymakers, and the general public. Recommends alternatives to testing and provides strategies to eliminate inappropriate practices. ($8.) National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1834 Connecticut Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20009–5786; 1–800–424–2460.

Beyond Rhetoric: A New American Agenda for Children and Families

National Commission on Children, 1991

This report presents a comprehensive national policy that outlines the steps necessary to ensure that all American children grow up healthy and productive. Emphasizes strengthening families and securing the country's future. (First copy free.) National Commission on Children, 1111 18th Street NW, Suite 810, Washington, DC 20036; (202) 254–3800.

Caring Communities: Supporting Young Children and Families

National School Readiness Task Force, 1991

This report outlines ways in which communities should mobilize public, private, and voluntary efforts to assist young children and families. Recommendations include providing integrated and comprehensive services, adopting developmentally appropriate teaching and assessment practices, encouraging parent involvement and support networks, and improving staff training and compensation. ($10.) National Association of State Boards of Education, 1012 Cameron Street, Alexandria, VA 22314; (703) 684–4000.

The Demand and Supply of Child Care in 1990

B. Willer, S. L. Hoffert, E. E. Kisker, P. D. Hawkins, E. Farquhar, and F. Glantz, 1991

This book (#136) summarizes highlights from two major reports: *The National Child Care Survey 1990*, sponsored by the National Association for the Education of Young Children and the Administration for Children, Youth and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; and *A Profile of Child Care Settings*, sponsored by the Office of Policy and Planning, U.S. Department of Education. Covers parents' child care needs, the supply and use of child care centers and family day care homes, staffing patterns and turnover, program goals and activities, program structure, and fees. ($5.) National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1834 Connecticut Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20009–5786; 1–800–424–2460.

Developmentally Appropriate Practices in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children From Birth Through Age 8

Sue Bredekamp, ed., 1987

This work (#224) defines the early childhood profession's consensus about appropriate and inappropriate teaching practices for children from infancy to 8 years old. ($5.) National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1834 Connecticut Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20009–5786; 1–800–424–2460.

Does Early Intervention Help?

Barbara J. Smith and Philip S. Strain, 1988

This *ERIC Digest* (#E455) defines early intervention and summarizes research that suggests that early intervention boosts academic achievement and socialization and is cost effective over the long term because it saves money in special services. ($1.) ERIC Clearinghouse on Handicapped and Gifted Children, Council for Exceptional Children, 1920 Association Drive, Reston, VA 22091–1589; (703) 264–9474.

Early Childhood at Risk: Actions and Advocacy for Young Children

Victoria Jean Dimidjian, 1989

This 67-page publication (#1481–2) examines the problems of young children who lack the socialization and academic preparation needed to meet the demands of learning and to benefit fully from educational programs. Discusses poverty and young children, detachment from empowering adults, and pressures to leave childhood prematurely. Outlines four cornerstones of growth that must be in place before formal schooling begins. Includes three case studies of at-risk children. ($7.95.) National Education Association Professional Library, P.O. Box 509, West Haven, CT 06516.

Early Childhood Education and Child Care: Challenges and Opportunities for America's Public Schools

A. Bridgman, 1989

This book (#021–00251) addresses a new role for public schools—that of early childhood educator and child care provider. It reviews research, identifies exemplary programs, and provides guidance to schools on how to establish and maintain a successful association. ($16.95.) American Association of School Administrators, 1801 North Moore Street, Arlington, VA 22209–9988; (703) 875–0730.

Early Childhood Education and the Elementary School Principal

National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP), 1990

This report offers elementary school principals, educators, and parents guidelines for establishing developmentally appropriate preschool programs. It provides checklists for reviewing standards in curriculum, personnel, accountability, parent, and community issues. ($11.95 for NAESP members; $14.95 for nonmembers.) National Association of Elementary School Principals, 1615 Duke Street, Alexandria, VA 22314; (703) 684–3345.

Early Childhood Special Education: Birth to Three

June B. Jordan, James J. Gallagher, Patricia L. Huntinger, and Merle B. Karnes, eds., 1990

This 257-page book (#P325) is for teachers and program administrators who are preparing to teach infants and toddlers with handicaps. It addresses the roles of parents, paraprofessionals, and professionals as well as state and local leaders. Among the topics discussed are identifying clients, implementing Public Law 99–457, and evaluating programs. ($28.50.) ERIC Clearinghouse on Handicapped and Gifted Children, Council for Exceptional Children, 1920 Association Drive, Reston, VA 22091–1589; (703) 264–9474.

Early Intervention for Infants and Toddlers: A Team Effort

ERIC Clearinghouse on Handicapped and Gifted Children, 1989

This *ERIC Digest* (#E461) discusses the implications of Public Law 99–457, The Education of the Handicapped Act Amendments of 1986, for the provision of services to handicapped and at-risk children from birth through 5 years of age and their families. Advocates early intervention team approaches. ($1.) ERIC Clearinghouse on Handicapped and Gifted Children, Council for Exceptional Children, 1920 Association Drive, Reston, VA 22091–1589; (703) 264–9474.

Easing the Transition from Preschool to Kindergarten

Head Start Bureau, 1987

This booklet is intended as a guide for early childhood teachers and administrators who wish to help children make a smooth transition from preschool to kindergarten. Stresses communication between the two teachers and between teachers and parents; identifies possible transition activities. (Multiple copies available free.) Head Start Bureau, Office of Human Development Services, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, P.O. Box 1182, Washington, DC 20013.

Encouraging Young Children's Writing

Jane Maehr, 1991

This *ERIC Digest* (#EDO–PS–91–1) presents a developmental approach to literacy. Young children are encouraged to write to communicate and express themselves before they have received formal instruction in the mechanics of reading and writing. High/Scope early childhood programs are referenced. (Free.) ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education, University of Illinois, 805 West Pennsylvania Avenue, Urbana, IL 61801; (217) 333–1386.

Escalating Kindergarten Curriculum

Lorrie A. Shepard and Mary Lee Smith, 1989

This *ERIC Digest* (#EDO–PS–89–2) summarizes research on kindergarten retention and examines the social stigma the children who are left behind face. Blames retention on

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General Reading List (continued)

the increasing academic demands of kindergarten; outlines alternatives to retention. (Free.) ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education, University of Illinois, 805 West Pennsylvania Avenue, Urbana, IL 61801; (217) 333–1386.

Every Child a Learner: Reducing Risks of Learning Impairment During Pregnancy and Infancy

Education Commission of the States, 1990

This report compiles data from multiple sources to identify and suggest ways to alleviate major preventable conditions associated with the development of learning problems. ($5 plus $1.90 postage and handling.) Education Commission of the States, 707 17th Street, Suite 2700, Denver, CO 80202–3427; (303) 299–3692.

Excellence in Early Childhood Education: Defining Characteristics and Next-Decade Strategies

Sharon L. Kagan, 1990

Part of the Policy Perspectives Series, this 29-page publication analyzes the changing field of early childhood education and proposes a definition of excellence that includes quality, equality, and integrity. Recommends that the field shift from piecemeal programs to comprehensive, integrated systems. ($1.75.) Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402–9325; (202) 783–3238.

Families and Early Childhood Programs

Douglas R. Powell, 1989

This publication (#142) reviews information on relations between families and early childhood programs and on the operation and effectiveness of parent education and support programs. Includes research and theoretical perspectives as well as promising program practices. ($6.) National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1834 Connecticut Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20009–5786; 1–800–424–2460.

Family Living: Suggestions for Effective Parenting

Lilian G. Katz and others, 1990

This folder (#205) includes 33 articles on parenting and young children's feelings, behavior, and learning as well as *ERIC Digests*, resource lists, and a computer search reprint on parenting and family life. Printed on looseleaf sheets for convenient reproduction and sharing with parents in formal or informal settings. ($11.75 plus $1.50 postage and handling.) ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education, 805 West Pennsylvania Avenue, Urbana, IL 61801; (217) 333–1386.

Four-Year-Olds and Public Schooling

Sally Lubeck, 1990

This *ERIC Digest* (#EDO–PS–9–90) explores the demographic and social changes that are prompting the development of public programs for preschoolers and introduces various types of programs under consideration, including child care in public schools. (Free.) ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education, University of Illinois, 805 West Pennsylvania Avenue, Urbana, IL 61801; (217) 333–1386.

Good Teaching Practices for 4- and 5-Year-Olds

National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1990

This brochure (#522) is a position statement that defines appropriate ways of teaching 4- and 5-year-olds. It is targeted at parents, teachers, and school administrators. ($.50 each; $10 for 100 copies.) National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1834 Connecticut Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20009–5786; 1–800–424–2460.

How To Choose a Good Early Childhood Program

National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1990

This brochure (#525) is written for parents who are seeking quality care and education for their young

children. A Spanish edition, *Como Escoger un Buen Programa de Educación Pre-Escolar* (#510), is also available at the same price. ($.50 each; $10 for 100 copies.) National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1834 Connecticut Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20009–5786; 1–800–424–2460.

Kindergarten Policies: What Is Best for Children?

J. Peck, G. McCaig, and M.E. Sapp

This monograph (#141) discusses research on issues such as what age children should enter school, the usefulness of entrance tests, what makes an appropriate kindergarten curriculum, and full-day versus half-day kindergarten. ($6.) National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1834 Connecticut Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20009–5786; 1–800–424–2460.

Parental Involvement in Education

U.S. Department of Education, 1991

Part of the Policy Perspectives Series, this report by James S. Coleman discusses "social capital"—social relations within the family or community that are important for children's development. The author examines transformations in American households and asserts that schools have a new role to play in rebuilding social capital in communities and families. ($1.50.) Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402–9325; (202) 783–3238.

A Parent's Guide to That First Day at School

National School Public Relations Association, 1990

This booklet (#411–13378) presents guidelines regarding basic skills children should master before entering school and discusses school registration and the importance of familiarizing children with their schools and school grounds before the first day. Includes information about what parents should expect from schools. ($.69 each, minimum order of 25 copies.) National School Public Relations Association, 1501 Lee Highway, Suite 201, Arlington, VA 22209.

Preparing Young Children for Success: Guideposts for Achieving Our First National Goal

U.S. Department of Education, 1991

This booklet (#0–299–330) identifies and discusses key terms and concepts of the national school readiness goal, including disadvantaged and disabled children, high-quality programs, parental roles, public- and private-sector support for families, linking health and education issues, and improving service delivery. It identifies strategies for parents, educators, public and private sectors, community members, and policymakers and emphasizes the importance of collaborative efforts. (Free.) U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, 400 Maryland Avenue SW, Room 2183, Washington, DC 20202–6100; (202) 401–0990.

Protecting Children From Inappropriate Practices

Sue Bredekamp and Lorrie Shepard, 1990

Adapted from an article in *Young Children*, this *ERIC Digest* (#EDO–PS–90–9) addresses making decisions about school entrance and placement, evaluating programs, planning and individualizing curriculum and instruction, and promoting appropriate policies. (Free.) ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education, University of Illinois, 805 West Pennsylvania Avenue, Urbana, IL 61801; (217) 333–1386.

Readiness: Children and Schools

Lilian Katz, 1991

This *ERIC Digest* (#EDO–PS–91–4) discusses the concept of readiness in terms of a two-way interaction between children and schools. Children are more likely to experience success in their first school experience if they have a certain degree of social and intellectual readiness; at the same time, schools must be ready for the children who enter by having appropriate curriculum and staffing. (Free.) ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education, University of Illinois, 805 West Pennsylvania Avenue, Urbana, IL 61801; (217) 333–1386.

A Resource Guide to Public School Early Childhood Programs

Cynthia Warger, ed., 1988

This 198-page book (#611–88036A) guides public administrators through the planning and implementation of early childhood programs. Addresses demographic and economic trends and outlines differences between academic and developmentally appropriate curricula and between teacher-directed and child-initiated instruction. ($11.95.) Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1250 North Pitt Street, Alexandria, VA 22314; (703) 549–9110.

(continued)

General Reading List (continued)

Right From the Start
National Association of State Boards of Education, 1988

This professional statement of the National Association of State Boards of Education (#753) discusses strategies for implementing developmentally appropriate practices with children 4 to 8 years old. ($8.50.) National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1834 Connecticut Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20009–5786.

What Is a Quality Preschool Program?
Educational Resources Information Center, 1991

This pamphlet addresses commonly asked questions about preschool programs and discusses the importance of holistic, child-initiated activities. (Free in quantities up to 10; may be reproduced for larger groups.) ACCESS ERIC, 1600 Research Boulevard, Rockville, MD 20850–3172; 1–800–USE–ERIC (873–3742).

For Your Information

"For Your Information" is a column to help you stay abreast of important ERIC System developments. It provides information about new programs, products, and services from ERIC Clearinghouses and Support Components.

Adjunct Clearinghouse on Consumer Education Opens

The ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education (ERIC/ACVE), in conjunction with the National Institute for Consumer Education at Eastern Michigan University, has developed the Adjunct ERIC Clearinghouse on Consumer Education. Adjunct staff will identify and select materials related to consumer education, including decisionmaking, resource management, and citizen participation, for entry into the ERIC database. They will also work with ERIC/ACVE in publication development and dissemination activities. Rosella Bannister is director and Patricia Bonner is associate director of the Adjunct ERIC Clearinghouse on Consumer Education at the following address:

National Institute for Consumer Education
Eastern Michigan University
207 Rackham Building
Ypsilanti, MI 48197
(313) 487–2292

ERIC Facility Relocates

The ERIC Processing and Reference Facility has moved to 1301 Piccard Drive, Suite 300, Rockville, MD 20850–4305. Those who wish to submit documents for possible inclusion in the database and are not sure which Clearinghouse is most closely related to their subject matter should use this address when mailing copies. The ERIC Facility's phone number remains (301) 258–5500.

New Publication Highlights 350 Education-Related Information Centers

The 1992 *ERIC Directory of Education-Related Information Centers*, a resource on organizations offering reference and referral services to the general public, is now available from ACCESS ERIC for $15.* The *Education-Related Information Centers* directory describes 350 resource centers and other agencies providing information services such as publications, databases, and toll-free reference and referral phone lines related to some facet of education. Each entry includes contact information, a description of the organization and its target audience, and types of publications and services provided. Subjects covered range from AIDS to youth programs; subject and geographic indexes are included. To order, contact ACCESS ERIC, 1600 Research Boulevard, Rockville, MD 20850–3172; 1–800–USE–ERIC (873–3742).

*Add $2 handling for each publication shipped to Canada and $4 handling for each publication shipped to other foreign countries.

THE *Review*

Early School Entry Is Essential for Many Gifted Children

by Craig Howley

At least since the appearance of the classic study of school readiness by Morphet and Washburne (1931), and doubtless long before, educators have debated the issue of when children should start school. Nevertheless, "readiness," as Dr. Lilian Katz notes, remains an elusive construct. Parents and teachers have known from the beginning of this debate, however, that some children do benefit from schooling sooner than others.

The success of early school entry stems from two characteristics: first, the intellectual orientation of the home (Bloom, 1985) and second (to the extent that it is distinguishable from the first), the developmental characteristics of the child (Roedell, Jackson, and Robinson, 1980). In the case of gifted children, standardized tests capture data related to these characteristics.

Gifted children learn rapidly, and for them in particular, the instruction most schools provide moves too slowly (Rogers, 1986). Fortunately, most states now make provisions for the identification of gifted children, and most rely on IQ tests for this purpose (Howley, 1986). Whatever the dubious uses of IQ tests (Gould, 1981), they do *reliably* identify very able children who can move rapidly through schools *as they exist*—rather than schools in some idealized, and perhaps unattainable, future state. Courts have consistently upheld the use of IQ tests for this purpose (Zirkel and Stevens, 1986).

For many of these young children, early entry into kindergarten and first grade is essential (Pendarvis, Howley, and Howley, 1990; Rogers, 1986). It is not only legally defensible, but also able to be challenged by parents exercising due process rights when denied (Howley, 1986; Zirkel and Stevens, 1987).

Acceleration takes many forms, including early entry to school, and is one of the most evident success stories in American education (Braga, 1971; Daurio, 1979; Kulik and Kulik, 1984; Rogers, 1986). If we insist that all children enter school at the same time, what is to prevent us from applying that principle to acceleration at all ages? Indeed, many schools seem to take exactly that position in practice [see Howley (1987) for a description of the normative view that would apply such a rigid position to all children]. As a result, full-year accelerations are still remarkably difficult to arrange for very able children at any age (Howley, 1987; Stanley, 1986).

How can educators tell when early entry is beneficial for apparently able children? First, educators need to approach the entire question flexibly. Administrators, in particular, need to exert leadership. They need to credit acceleration as an effective and widely applicable option for gifted children, and cultivate its use on that basis. For *all* children—but especially gifted children—the position that the only legally and ethically defensible criterion for school entry is whatever date is set by district policy or state regulation is simply not viable.

Second, educators need to involve parents in planning and carrying out early entry placements. This effort will inevitably require some training for both parents and staff. If parents, teachers, and the bright young children who concern them communicate about the issues and endorse the effort, early entry arrangements proceed more smoothly.

Third, on a more mundane level, orderly procedures for considering options and developing plans need to be designed and followed. In many cases, the placement procedures used in special education will be technically adequate, but educators need to voice and act upon knowledge that acceleration is appropriate and necessary for many very able students—that is, for most of the gifted and for quite a few other able students as well.

Finally, typical readiness indicators (such as print awareness, familiarity with books, and early reading and math skills), especially in combination with identified giftedness, can help parents and educators decide between early entry to kindergarten and early entry to first grade.

Craig Howley is Co-Director of the ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools.

None of the preceding points is meant to suggest that social, emotional, and physical characteristics are irrelevant. Christopherson (1981), in advocating developmental placement, provides some guidelines for considering the issue. His rule of thumb is that the young gifted child should "exceed the 33rd percentile of older children for social and emotional development and the 10th percentile for physical development" in comparison to students in the new placement (p. 41).

Social, emotional, and physical considerations are usually not impediments to the successful acceleration of able youngsters. A more common experience is that able students who languish in the lockstep of age–grade placement become bored, frustrated, and cynical at early ages. In such straits, some children amuse themselves by instigating trouble among classmates.

Of course, when parents and educators accelerate students, they should expect minor adjustment problems. Such problems are normal, and informed and caring adults will take responsibility for solving the difficulties that arise. The fact that some adults have difficulty accepting such responsibility should not be a barrier to early entry and other forms of acceleration.

Obviously, some accelerated placements will not work out. With respect to social and emotional development, in particular, children in these circumstances must be protected from the tendency of adults to regard them as failures. The failure to accelerate able students, though much less visible than the risk of unsuccessful placement, does much greater damage to more students.

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ERIC

"Building Academically Strong Gifted Programs in Rural Schools"

"Building Academically Strong Gifted Programs in Rural Schools"(*ERIC Digest* EDO–RC–89) is a free two-page research synthesis available from the ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools.

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Research in Action provides you with a synthesis of recent research findings on current trends and issues in education. These brief analyses cover a broad range of topics important, as well as practical, to educators, parents, and students. Each document reprinted in this column includes references to additional reading materials and information sources on related topics. Published by ERIC's 16 subject-specific clearinghouses as *ERIC Digests*, many are available free from individual clearinghouses, while others are available for a nominal fee. Subsequent issues of *The ERIC Review* will highlight current *Digests* from other ERIC Clearinghouses.

Preparing Children With Disabilities for School

by Dianna Pinkerton

ERIC Clearinghouse on Handicapped and Gifted Children
ERIC Digest Series No. EDO-EC-91-8

"All disadvantaged and disabled children will have access to high quality and developmentally appropriate preschool programs that help prepare children for school."

— Objective under Goal 1 of the National Education Goals

How Does the Federal Government Support Readiness for Children With Disabilities?

Public Law 99-457, the 1986 Amendments to the Education of the Handicapped Act (EHA), addresses the needs of young children with disabilities through two programs: the Handicapped Infants and Toddlers Program for children from birth through age 2 and the Preschool Grants Program for 3- to 5-year-olds. Together these programs represent an important effort to expand the scope of services available to the nation's youngest children with disabilities and their families. The Handicapped Infants and Toddlers Program, Part H of the EHA, supports the planning, development, and implementation of an interagency system of early intervention services for infants and toddlers who have disabilities. The Preschool Grants Program, Section 619 of Part B of the EHA, is designed to ensure the availability of a free, appropriate public education for all children ages 3 to 5 with disabilities. Both programs provide federal support for meeting Goal 1 of the National Education Goals: "By the year 2000, all children in America will start school ready to learn." During the 1989–90 school year, approximately 642,000 children were served through these programs (*Thirteenth Annual Report to Congress*, 1991).

What Special Problems Do Children With Disabilities Face as They Make the Transition From Preschool to the General School Setting?

The transition from preschool to school can be difficult for a child with disabilities. The preschool environment, characterized by small groups and individual attention, is replaced by classrooms with

more children, fewer adults per child, and a greater demand for adapting to general classroom procedures and working independently (Carta, Atwater, Schwartz, and Miller, 1990). Parents and teachers from both receiving and sending programs need to be involved in placement as well as in scheduling and facilitating the move (Fowler, Schwartz, and Atwater, 1991). Public Law 99–457 recognizes the importance of preparing children and their families by requiring that specific steps be addressed in each child's Individualized Family Service Plan for children from birth through 2 years, or Individualized Education Program (IEP) for preschool children.

What Role Do Families Play?

Family members play a key role in providing information about the child's abilities, strengths and weaknesses, and interests. Parental insights complement information obtained from preschool sources and provide a broader picture of the child's capabilities and needs. Identifying specific ways for parents to be involved in the process is essential to a good transition (Bernheimer, Gallimore, and Weisner, 1990).

Parents may act as teachers, partners, decisionmakers, or advocates (Shearer and Shearer, 1977). They are teachers when they reinforce the skills acquired in preschool, partners when they communicate needs with school personnel, and decisionmakers when they participate in the IEP process. Parents can help prepare the child for the transition to public school by maintaining and generalizing skills necessary for the transition. They also serve as a bridge between the two programs, visiting the new program with their child, helping the child to become familiar with the new setting, and discussing concerns and fears connected with the upcoming change. They can also help bridge the gap by arranging visits with former preschool friends and teachers as well as with new classmates. Parents can help their child develop skills in following directions, playing independently, attending to task, and caring for themselves. These skills will help prepare the child for the new setting (Hains, Fowler, and Chandler, 1988).

What Role Do Teachers Play?

Both sending and receiving teachers play important roles in the transition process. Teacher attitudes, instructional priorities, and communication with parents and other members of the transition team will determine the quality of the child's transition (Hains, Fowler, and Chandler, 1988). Sending and receiving teachers may have different goals and priorities, but they play complementary roles in preparing the child for the move from preschool to the general school setting.

The sending teacher should find out what skills the child will need to function adequately in the new setting and implement a program for preparing the child to develop those skills. Familiarity with the receiving program is essential to design an appropriate transition curriculum. The sending teacher can gain a better understanding of prerequisite skills by visiting the receiving classroom.

Behavioral requirements for successful functioning for children placed in an integrated setting have been assessed and are referred to as "survival skills." These survival skills include functioning independently during group instruction, following classroom routines, completing tasks within an allotted time period, and working in the absence of teacher direction. Teaching survival skills as part of the preschool curriculum helps prepare the child for the demands of the general school setting (Carta, Atwater, and Schwartz, 1991). Skill-building activities should be developmentally appropriate for each child.

The success of the transition preparation is ultimately determined by the child's adaptation to the new environment. The receiving teacher's attitude toward and experience with children with disabilities may be factors in the success of the child's placement. Some flexibility will probably be required on the teacher's part to adjust expectations and adapt to the child's special needs. The sending and receiving teachers will have the continuing role of acting as liaisons between programs and with parents. Good communication and clearly defined goals will facilitate the preparation for the child's move from preschool to the general school setting.

What Are the Elements of a Successful Transition Process?

The Capstone Transition Process (Johnson, Cook, and Yongue, 1990) is one model that provides clear guidelines for the transition process. The first activity initiates long-range planning by establishing a "Transition Timeline." This timeline serves as a guide for accomplishing transition activities and can be set up in chart form to track activities. The Capstone Transition Process addresses specific activities beginning 12 months before the move to a new program. The process includes preparation, implementation, and evaluation activities. The initial steps of the process are designed to prepare the participants for their role in the transition. Steps include notifying and preparing parents and teachers from both the sending and the receiving programs; collecting and updating data regarding the child's needs; and developing a profile of communication procedures, available services, prerequisite skills, and teacher expectations. The preparation phase of the process culminates with the development by the transition team of an IEP for use as the basis of educational programming in the new setting. Following the IEP meeting, the timeline provides reminders for the transfer of information and records to the receiving program. The final step calls for an evaluation of the effectiveness of the process.

Capstone Transition Timeline

- Develop transition timeline.
- Notify appropriate administrators of students approaching transition.
- Inform parent(s) or primary caregiver(s) that the child will be transitioning and collect information on family transition needs.
- Determine communication policy of potential receiving program(s) and obtain description of program(s).

- Obtain information from teacher(s) in potential receiving program(s), including the program or classroom overview and skills perceived as important for transition into classroom.

- Verify the receipt of transition information or follow up request for transition or other information.

- Reevaluate; verify assessment and eligibility.

- Prepare parents for transition planning meeting.

- Hold transition planning meeting.

- Hold IEP meeting. Obtain permission from parents to release information.

- Provide information to all transition team participants.

- Link parent or primary caregiver of child transitioning with a parent or primary caregiver of a child already attending the new program.

- Send receiving program all pertinent records and verify their receipt.

- Provide receiving program with information about the child's current program.

- Evaluate the effectiveness of the process after completion.

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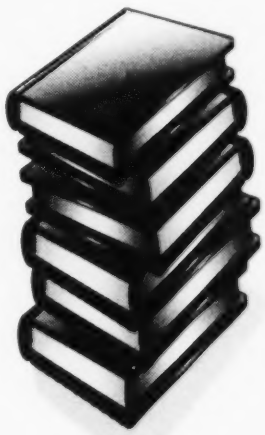

Majority of Elementary Students Attended Preschool

According to preliminary findings from the 1991 National Household Education Survey (NHES:91), 71 percent of children in first or second grade in 1991 attended a day care center or nursery school program—including prekindergarten or Head Start—on a regular basis before starting first grade.

The survey, conducted by the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics, involved telephone interviews with the parents or guardians of 13,892 children between the ages of 3 and 8 years.

Attendance at center-based programs was found to correlate with the educational status of the children's parents, with children of more highly educated parents more likely to have attended a preschool program of some sort. Among the findings:

- About 53 percent of the children in families in which no parent had completed high school did not attend a center-based program prior to first grade.

- About 21 percent of the children in families in which one or both parents' highest level of education was a bachelor's degree did not have a center-based program experience before entering first grade.

Other questions in the 1991 National Household Education Survey addressed kindergarten and primary school entry, retention in early grades, parent participation in their child's education, and the education environment of the home.

The National Center for Education Statistics will release more information about this survey in the coming months. Public use data files may be purchased from NCES starting in early 1992. For more information on NHES:91 or to receive copies of early data releases, write to the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, Education Information Branch, 555 New Jersey Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20208–5641.

Jerry West
National Center for
Education Statistics

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ERIC New Titles in Education

This column features new publications produced by the ERIC Clearinghouses and the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, as well as selected resources recently abstracted from the ERIC database. Title, author, availability, cost, order number, and a brief description are provided to help you locate these resources easily through ERIC.

If a publication is for sale, the price is listed; make your check or money order payable to the organization receiving your order. To expedite handling of your order, please refer to the order number (if provided) as well as the title. ERIC document (ED) numbers are provided, when available, for readers who wish to order microfiche or paper copy from the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (1–800–443–ERIC).

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dult, Career, and Vocational Education

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Competency-Based Career Development Strategies and National Career Development Guidelines, 1991
ED 327 739
Howard Splete and Amy Stewart
IN 345; $10.50

Provides an overview of the National Career Development Guidelines and analyzes the abstracts of 1,500 ERIC documents coded by National Guidelines areas and competencies and education level (e.g., elementary, high school, community college). Includes sample career development activities related to the National Guidelines for each education level.

Family and Intergenerational Literacy Programs: An Update of "The Noises of Literacy," 1991
ED 327 736
Ruth S. Nickse
IN 342; $8.75

Discusses trends and issues in family and intergenerational literacy programs sponsored by schools, libraries, community service organizations, and corporations. Describes 12 programs that combine approaches from adult basic skills improvement and children's literacy development and assesses four generic program models.

ounseling and Personnel Services

Order these publications from the ERIC Clearinghouse on Counseling and Personnel Services, University of Michigan, School of Education, Room 2108, 610 East University Street, Ann Arbor, MI 48109–1259; (313) 764–9492.

Counseling Futures, 1991
ED 329 862
Garry R. Walz and others
EC109; $8.95

Presents a look at the evolution and future direction of counseling and counselor education. Addresses the impact of societal changes on counseling.

CounselorQuest: Concise Analyses of Critical Counseling Topics, 1991
ED 330 984
Garry R. Walz, compiler
$19.95

Comprises 167 *ERIC Digests* from 8 ERIC Clearinghouses on topics of interest to counselors who work with clients from preschool age through adulthood. The *Digests* are indexed by educational level and topic. They address a wide range of issues, including at-risk students, career development, school selection, and stress.

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Order these publications from the ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management, University of Oregon, 1787 Agate Street, Eugene, OR 97403–5207; (503) 346–5043.

Involving the Families of At-Risk Youth in the Educational Process, 1991
ED 328 946
Lynn Balster Liontos
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Provides suggestions for involving families who are poor, nonwhite, or speak a language other than English in the education of their children. Identifies barriers in reaching at-risk families and proposes ways of overcoming these barriers.

Principals: How To Train, Recruit, Select, Induct, and Evaluate Leaders for America's Schools, 1991
Mark E. Anderson
$8.95 prepaid; add $2.50 handling for billed orders

Summarizes and draws implications from research and exemplary practices related to the recruitment, training, and retention of effective elementary and secondary school principals.

lementary and Early Childhood Education

Order this publication from the ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education, University of Illinois, 805 West Pennsylvania Avenue, Urbana, IL 61801; (217) 333–1386.

The Teacher's Role in the Social Development of Young Children, 1991
ED 331 642
Lilian G. Katz and Diane E. McClellan
Cat. #207; $10 plus $1.50 for postage and handling

Describes social competence and how it develops in children. Provides teaching strategies for strengthening children's interactive skills in areas such as turn-taking and dealing with differences.

andicapped and Gifted Children

Order these publications from the ERIC/OSEP Special Project, ERIC Clearinghouse on Handicapped and Gifted Children, The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), 1920 Association Drive, Reston, VA 22091; (703) 620–3660.

Exceptional Children at Risk—CEC Mini-Library, 1991
$88/set or $8.90/book; $62/set or $6.25/book for CEC members

Provides a synthesis of literature in the different areas of risk and offers suggestions for teachers, program developers, and administrators in a series of 11 booklets. Topics covered include aggressive and violent students, abuse and neglect of exceptional children, special health care in the school, the homeless population, dropouts from special education, substance-exposed children, depression and suicide, language-minority students with disabilities, alcohol use and disabilities, rural exceptional children and youth, and pregnant and parenting youth in special education.

Integrating Services for Children and Youth With Emotional and Behavioral Disorders, 1991
$25; $17.50 for CEC members

Outlines the need for and methods of delivering interagency programs and services for young people with emotional and behavioral disorders. Links the fields of special education, social work, psychology, and medicine.

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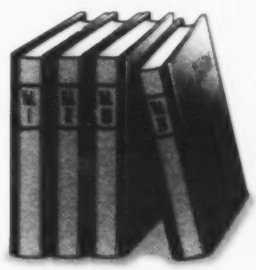

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